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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

BY

MARION ESTELLA HOLDER

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1991

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE submitted by MARION E. HOLDER in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION.

Linda LaRocque, Supervisor

Joe Fris

Dianne Oberg

AUGUST, 1991

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and friends who encouraged, supported and believed in me during its writing. Thank you for the support you gave and for giving me the time to pursue this goal.

ABSTRACT

This descriptive study investigated conflict management techniques employed by principals in public schools in New Brunswick when dealing with conflict situations which arose with adults in their work life. Thirteen principals from all school levels were interviewed. They related details of conflict situations, how they handled the situation, positive and negative outcomes of the conflict and ratings on the success of the resolution. These results were analyzed to discover conflict participants, type of conflict, management techniques used, outcomes and ratings. The most common techniques identified were information exchange, coercion, negotiation and intervention strategies. In general, principals found they learned better ways of handling situations from the conflict they encountered. This information should be helpful to practising or aspiring principals in suggesting ways in which conflict can be handled. Suggestions are given for further studies which might cast more light on the nature of conflict and its aftermath.

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Chapter 1

Principals and Conflict -- A Focus for Attention

Principals are assigned the responsibility of managing school buildings and those individuals who work in those buildings. A large portion of the principal's work involves human interactions. It is inevitable that some of these human interactions will involve conflict where groups or individuals hold differing views, espouse differing values or pursue differing goals. When these situations arise, school principals may feel the need to become involved in resolving these disputes in order to maintain or restore effective functioning of the school. An interest in how principals perceive and handle conflict situations in their work has led to this research project.

Problem Background

Kagan, Havemann and Segal (1984) write about the unpleasant emotions individuals experience when their goals are thwarted. These emotions might include anxiety, uncertainty and feelings of being torn and distressed.

Individuals deal with these emotions as best they can and they may or may not interfere with performance on the job. Krech, Crutchfield and Livson (1970) suggest that tolerance varies with the individual and the situation. They define frustration tolerance as the threshold level beyond which tension results in qualitatively different kinds of effect on behavior. The employee who normally does a satisfactory job may cease to perform adequately when the frustration tolerance level is exceeded. Employees may expend so much energy dealing with their negative feelings about the conflict that they haven't sufficient energy for their work. Emotional agitation may interfere with the rational processes of deliberation and choice or may result in cognitive narrowing whereby the individual becomes blind to possible substitute goals and alternative pathways to solve the conflict.

Minor conflicts occur constantly in organizations and managers cannot reasonably be expected to involve themselves in each one. Researchers agree, however, that when conflicts interfere with the functions of the organization, they must be resolved. If the conflicting parties are not able to resolve their differences, then managers must intervene and assist in settling disputes for the good of all.

It is clear that business managers are expected to develop skills in handling conflict situations. Business organization texts routinely address the topic of conflict in the workplace (Hampton, Summer & Webber, 1978; Reitz, 1981;

Robbins, 1979; Steers, 1981; Williams, 1978). It is typical for the authors of these texts to discuss the reasons conflicts arise among the members of organizations and suggest ways in which managers might handle these situations.

Large corporations normally have a Personnel Department whose employees handle concerns of the workers in the organization. A portion of those concerns relates to interactions among personnel. Some organizations contain a Personnel Relations Department whose responsibilities include helping members of the firm work out differences.

Further support for the notion that personnel relations are important in business organizations is found by reviewing the types of books, training programs and workshops which are made available to business managers. A great number of these focus on how to get the best from employees as a means of increasing productivity. It is unlikely that employees whose energies are being consumed by conflict situations can give their best work to the organization.

Business managers are clearly expected to give some attention to human relations in their firms and to provide assistance for employees to get along well enough to do their jobs satisfactorily. The question arises whether school principals have similar responsibilities and, therefore, enough need of conflict management skills to make a study of these skills worthwhile.

School principals are charged with the responsibility of

managing their schools. This involves many of the tasks business managers must handle: budget, property management, quality control, etc. Schools seek to produce educated students and this means some profound differences from business organizations which produce inanimate objects. However, both school principals and business managers must be concerned about the people in their organizations and do what they can to enable employees to work as effectively as possible in order to have an efficient operation.

Typical situations which arise in a principal's work day illustrate the need for skills in dealing with conflict situations. Examples could include a grant to the Science Department for new equipment when the head of the English Department feels her need is greater. A student who has been disciplined by a school administrator appeals to the School Board and the school decision is overturned. Two staff members apply for a promotion and only one position is available. A parent disagrees with a school rule and supports his child in defying the rule. A principal and a superintendent disagree on how a new curriculum should be implemented. Each of these examples illustrates that individuals can disagree on goals, procedures or values and this brings individuals into conflict. Satisfactory resolutions must be sought so that schools can continue to operate and the individuals who work there can continue to work together effectively. As the manager of the school, it

is necessary for the principal to intervene where required in order to insure that people can work together in a manner which will allow the school to fulfill its function.

A number of researchers have investigated the management of conflict in educational settings (Caldwell & Byers, 1988; Formisano, 1987; Hurlbert, 1973; Lindelow & Scott, 1989; Loewen, 1983; Maidment, 1987; Nelson, 1980; Weber, 1986). Two of these studies have concentrated on the principal's role in managing conflict (Caldwell & Byers, 1988; Formisano, 1987). It is clear that managing conflict which occurs in educational settings is being investigated by researchers but little information is available relating specifically to principals.

A study designed to investigate conflict management techniques used by school principals in their work should provide useful information to add to the research studies already completed.

Problem Statement

It is evident that researchers are interested in the topic of conflict. It is also evident that managers need to know about the effects of conflict in the work place and how to handle conflict situations appropriately. Principals, as managers of schools, encounter conflict situations. The problem is that little information that has been validated for schools is available about how they handle these situations and the outcomes of their actions. A search for the answers to these questions is the basis of this study.

This study was designed to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What techniques do principals use to handle conflict in their work situations?

2. How successful do principals feel these techniques to be?

3. What do principals see as outcomes of conflict situations?

Significance

The results of this study should be of interest to school principals. Knowledge about conflict management techniques and their success in a variety of situations encountered by principals should provide helpful insights for principals in their work. Principals would benefit as well from knowing the outcomes of conflict situations which could provide guidance for them in dealing with their own work conflicts. If it is possible to identify particularly successful techniques, principals might wish to be trained in those techniques for use in their work.

Other educational administrators should find the results of this study of interest. Superintendents, supervisors, coordinators, vice-principals and department heads would at times encounter conflicts similar to those reported by principals. Individuals in those positions should find the experiences of principals helpful in dealing with their own conflict situations. Training programs in effective conflict

management should be of assistance to individuals in these positions.

The findings of this study should be of some interest to anyone involved or interested in the education field. The conflicts studied will involve incidents encountered in school-related situations. They may provide helpful insights into how best to deal with conflict situations that may arise for anyone involved in education.

Finally, the findings may be of interest to those involved in the field of human relations. The study will look at a particular type of human interaction (conflict situation) and findings should give some insight into how individuals react in such encounters. It might be of interest to compare the findings of this study with findings from similar studies done on business organizations and personal lives to determine similarities and differences. This might help determine if techniques and outcomes differ significantly in different circumstances.

Assumptions

This study is based on the assumption that conflict situations exist in school settings and that principals will be involved in resolving conflict. It is assumed also that principals can describe their interventions in enough detail and accuracy to allow for comparison with conflict management techniques identified in the literature.

Delimitations

In an attempt to narrow the focus somewhat to a more manageable size, I will investigate only conflicts which occur between principals and other adults in their work environment. I believe that this emphasis may provide a broad range of identifiable management techniques. In principal-student conflicts, the power is so overwhelmingly in favor of the principal that use of that power could very well be the favorite choice of a method for managing conflict.

This study is delimited to principals in three districts of the public school system of New Brunswick.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include the procedure whereby respondents are asked to recall incidents in which they were involved. Should inaccurate or incomplete details be given, the findings of the study could be biased. Findings will be based only on the respondent's perspective of the conflict incident. It is beyond the scope of this study to interview all participants of the conflict situations although doing so might change the conclusions drawn.

A further limitation is inherent in the nature of volunteers. Principals were invited to participate and told they had the right to agree or decline. Those who agreed may differ from those who declined in ways which would prejudice the findings. Borg and Gall (1983) review research on the nature of volunteers. Research supports the view that

volunteers tend to characteristics that differ from nonvolunteers. For example, volunteers have been identified as tending to be more sociable than nonvolunteers. Therefore, principals who volunteered for this study might be more likely to discuss a conflict situation than would their nonvolunteering colleagues. Should volunteering principals not be representative of the principal population, then the findings of this study would be biased.

Overview

This chapter outlines the background of the problem and the questions to be addressed by the study. The study will explore the conflict management techniques used by principals, their rating of the success of these techniques and outcomes of the conflict situations. Study findings should provide help to principals and other administrators in dealing effectively with conflict situations. Assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the study are outlined.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature and research findings concerning conflict. Aspects covered include a conceptualization of conflict, a review of conflict management techniques, outcomes of conflict situations and a summary of how this information relates to the conceptualization and design of the study.

Chapter 3 outlines the design of the study, addresses trustworthiness and ethical issues, describes the sample and explains data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. It describes the conflict participants, the types of conflicts encountered, conflict management techniques used by principals, outcomes of the conflict situations and ratings given to the resolutions by the principals.

Chapter 5 relates the study findings to previous theory and research and discusses the implications of the findings.

Chapter 2

Conflict and its Implications

A good deal of information exists in the literature to explain the nature of conflict and why individuals become involved in conflict situations. Considerable attention is also given to how people manage conflict and the outcomes which result from conflict situations. This chapter will provide an overview of research findings to date and explain how this study relates to the work of other researchers.

Conceptualizations of Conflict

Conflict occurs because individuals and groups have different goals and values and achieving the goal of one often means frustration of the goal of the other. Kagan et al. (1984) define motive as "desire to reach a goal that has value for the individual" (p. 354) and frustration as "the blocking of motive satisfaction by some kind of obstacle" (p. 374). They define conflict as "the simultaneous arousal of two or more incompatible motives, resulting in unpleasant emotions" (p. 374). Individuals experience frustration when they cannot

satisfy their motives and are placed in situations of conflict with the group or individual who is perceived to be blocking the attainment of the goal.

Individuals who are experiencing a good deal of frustration and strong negative emotions due to being unable to achieve their goals may choose to do something to improve their situation (Kagan et al., 1984). One course of action chosen might be to confront the conflict situation in an assertive way. The individual might instead choose to employ defense mechanisms which would decrease the level of discomfort being experienced, at least for the time being.

Assertive coping strategies involve actions directed toward solving the problem and reducing the anxiety and stress being felt by the individuals involved. Improvement may be achieved by changing the environment, changing the behavior of individuals involved, learning to manage the internal stresses being experienced, considering alternative ways of achieving the goal or planning for satisfactory substitute goals (Kagan et al., 1984; Krech et al., 1970; Lazarus, 1974; Munn, 1946).

Defense mechanisms can be helpful in reducing the stress involved in conflict situations and are used at times by most individuals. The danger lies in overuse where individuals display noncoping behaviors consistently and never succeed in finding better solutions to stressful situations (Kagan et al., 1984). Examples of defense mechanisms include

aggression, projection, withdrawal and repression (Johnson, 1961; Krech et al., 1970). An example of aggression would occur if an individual were to launch an attack against the position of the individual with whom the conflict is occurring. Projection implies the assigning of blame to others for the uncomfortable situation being encountered. Individuals who withdraw remove themselves from the situation and refuse to deal with the conflict. Repression suggests a situation in which the individual ignores or internalizes distressing aspects of a conflict.

This study is based on the assumption that principals will be involved in conflict situations in their schools. The feelings of frustration reported in the literature and the use of assertive coping strategies and defense mechanisms should be anticipated as part of the experiences principals will have.

Conflicts arise from various sources and occur between various groups and individuals in the work environment. Steers (1981) reports that conflict occurs when a worker interferes with the goals or concerns of another worker. Conflict occurs at all levels of the organization and may be of the interpersonal, intergroup or intragroup form.

Dubrin (1981) outlines some of the sources of conflict experienced by individuals in an organization. Individuals or departments may have to compete for limited resources. Job roles may place individuals in conflict positions -- the

supervisor who must rate the performance of other employees will encounter conflict when the employee disagrees with the assessment given. Groups or individuals may have objectives and goals which appear mutually exclusive. Employees may have personal differences which create conflict situations in their work. Conflict can occur between any individuals or groups who hold differing views on these or other matters of concern to them.

Principals have job responsibilities such as management of resources and personnel, assessment of employee performance and delivery of educational programs which are likely to provide some of the sources of conflict outlined above.

Conflict Management Techniques

It is clear from the literature available on the subject that conflict situations arise in the work environment. Groups and individuals involved in such situations usually have the choice of ignoring the situation or intervening in some way to bring about changes which will solve the controversy (Steers, 1984; Turner & Weed, 1983). A number of conflict management techniques have been identified by researchers.

Non-educational settings. A good deal of research on conflict management techniques has taken place in non-educational settings. Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) studied ten business organizations in the United States to determine if structures and procedures differed and, if so, what factors

might influence those differences. One dimension they studied was resolving conflict and they found confrontation and problem-solving to be the most effective method of resolving conflict. They found that managers in high-performing organizations used confrontation significantly more than managers in medium- and low-performing organizations. Rather than ignoring conflict situations, these managers met them head-on, tried to determine the cause and looked for solutions to the problem. There is strong support in the literature for this approach as being a useful one in dealing with conflict (Bittel, 1985; Dubrin, 1981; Gerstein & Reagan, 1986; Likert & Likert, 1976; Turner & Weed, 1983).

Once a business manager has determined that confronting the conflict situation is appropriate, research suggests several avenues which may be followed. Competing implies a power struggle where only one party to the conflict can win (Campbell, Corbally & Nystrand, 1983; Robbins, 1979; Steers, 1981; Thomas, 1977). The position or goal of one party to the conflict is upheld while the other party loses their point. For example, a company may decide that it must institute a wage freeze in order to maintain a viable financial position. Management must hold to this position in spite of opposition from employees because it views the move as essential for the welfare of the company.

Collaborating suggests a situation in which the parties to the conflict work together to achieve a resolution

acceptable to both (Campbell et al., 1983; Hodgetts, 1980; March & Simon, 1958; Moore, 1986; Robbins, 1979; Thomas, 1977; Walton & McKersie, 1965). An example of this might occur when a company is preparing to produce a new product. A collaborative process would allow for consideration of all perspectives and should encourage commitment by all participants to make the new procedure work. The final plan adopted would reflect the input of all parties.

Compromising occurs when parties to a conflict give up some of their objectives in order to arrive at a solution (Campbell et al., 1983; Hodgetts, 1980; March & Simon, 1958; Moore, 1986; Steers, 1981; Thomas, 1977; Walton & McKersie, 1965). Suppose a business were trying to establish a policy for part-time workers and both management and workers had conditions they wished included in the agreement. A compromise would be achieved if both parties agreed to modify some demands in order to establish the policy.

Accommodating happens when one party to a conflict modifies a demand in order to accommodate the other party (Campbell et al., 1983; Robbins, 1979; Thomas, 1977). For example, a business might wish to establish a new policy on sick leave and be opposed by the union representing the workers. If the company modifies the policy to maintain good working relationships, this would be an example of accommodation.

The above techniques are general categories cited by a

number of writers in the business organization field. A difficulty encountered in reviewing the research is different names given to conflict management techniques which are essentially the same. For example, Moore (1986) outlines a series of measures which escalate in severity and degree of control exercised by the parties in the dispute: avoidance, informal problem-solving discussions, negotiation, mediation, administrative/executive dispute resolution approach, arbitration, judicial approach, legislative approach and extralegal approach. To simplify this typology, informal problem-solving discussions, negotiation, mediation, administrative-executive dispute resolution and arbitration could be considered as means of working together to try to arrive at a solution to the problem by collaborating, compromising and accommodating. The judicial approach, legislative approach and extralegal approach suggest competing modes where only one point of view will prevail. Although each technique identified by researchers has its own unique profile, looking for commonalities in these approaches allows for some broader generalizations which make the topic more manageable and provide useful information for practical application.

The literature revealed quite a number of terms used to describe conflict management techniques. Thomas (1977) identified competing, collaborating, compromising and accommodating modes. These modes seemed to summarize most of

the techniques discussed by the researchers. The field of labor negotiations seems to have a rather specialized vocabulary and readers interested in that area will find Walton and McKersie (1965) a good starting point in understanding the complexities of that process.

Educational settings. Lindelow and Scott (1989) write on managing conflict in the school setting. They support the view that administrators should understand conflict and be knowledgeable about as many conflict management techniques as possible. The techniques they suggest include avoidance, redressing individual grievances, creation of superordinate goals to motivate cooperation, creative problem-solving, compromise, changes in organizational structure, authoritative command and reconciliation of conflicting parties' differences. They support the view that no one method is best and principals should be able to use a variety of techniques in order to maximize constructive conflict and minimize destructive conflict. The techniques they cite resemble closely those identified by writers and researchers working in non-educational settings. This supports the premise that similarities exist in conflict management techniques used in both educational and non-educational settings and suggests that findings in one of these areas may provide some insight into techniques used in the other setting.

Caldwell and Byers (1988) studied conflict resolution behavior exhibited by principals and teachers in 47 middle

level public schools in south central Pennsylvania. The principal and eight teachers in each of these schools were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to measure the level of conflict in the school, the principal's personality predisposition and the conflict resolution behavior attributed to principals both by themselves and by the teachers in their schools.

Results showed that both teachers and principals perceived moderate to low conflict levels present in their schools and that cooperative modes of conflict resolution occurred more frequently than competitive modes. The instrument used identified cooperative modes of handling conflict as confrontation, compromise and smoothing. Withdrawal and forcing were presented as uncooperative/competitive modes of handling conflict. Principals in this study seemed to be more relationship-oriented than task-oriented. This may be one reason why cooperative modes of handling conflict were more common as cooperative modes are more likely to enhance relationships than are competitive modes. Competitive modes are more likely to lead to winners and losers each of whom experience emotions connected to those positions.

Formisano (1987) studied six female principals in elementary and secondary schools who were perceived to be skillful in handling conflict to discover what conflict management techniques they used. She discovered that these

principals used strategies which did not threaten relationships and suggested that research indicating women in organizations tended to be more relationship-oriented than men would support this finding. However, Caldwell and Byers (1988) found their group of 47 principals of both sexes to be relationship-oriented. More research of this type might determine if quantitative differences exist.

The Formisano study was conducted by observing the principals and by doing open-ended, indepth interviews. She found the principals in the study handled conflict that came from outside differently from conflicts they initiated. Conflicts from outside were handled with attempts by the principals to diffuse them. Principals listened, used humor, empathized, accommodated and asked questions in attempts to diffuse the conflict situations. When principals initiated the conflict, they attempted to stimulate the other parties to the conflict to work toward the specific goal they wished to achieve.

Conclusions. Conflict management techniques are used by managers in both non-educational and educational settings to resolve conflicts which arise. Researchers have labelled a large number of techniques but some broad generalizations may be possible. These generalizations allow for a more manageable number of techniques which are fairly descriptive of those used by managers. Managers in educational settings must manage conflict and there is evidence that the conflict

management techniques of principals have been studied.

This study should provide useful information by identifying conflict management techniques used by the principals in the study.

Outcomes of Conflict Management Techniques

There are differing views on what the outcomes of conflict situations are and should be. Once viewed as destructive and to be avoided at all costs, conflict has come to be accepted as a normal part of the functioning of an organization. Managers now concern themselves with learning to manage conflict and to benefit from the creative energy it can release (Lindelow & Scott, 1989; Sheppard, 1984). In organizations where social integration and stability are emphasized, conflict might be viewed as disruptive and dangerous (Brown, 1983). On the other hand, conflict might be seen as energizing in organizations where social diversity and development are valued. The outcomes achieved by managers who employ conflict management techniques range from positive to negative.

Non-educational settings. Considerable support exists in the literature for the positive outcomes of conflict and its management (Brown, 1983; Dubrin, 1981; Krech et al., 1970; Likert & Likert, 1976; Sheppard, 1984). Managing conflict appropriately may allow conflicting parties to focus attention more effectively on achieving a goal. Irrelevant and distracting aspects may diminish as a result of effort exerted

toward achieving a goal. Individuals involved in the conflict may gain a better understanding and a broader perspective of all aspects of the situation. More creative solutions may be forthcoming from people working under the tension of conflict. Working through a conflict situation may help diagnose problem areas in an organization. Individuals who have worked through a conflict situation to a satisfactory solution should feel more positive about approaching a similar situation in the future. An organization is likely to be more dynamic and be better able to survive in the world of business if the individuals within it can appreciate and deal with differing points of view.

There are, of course, negative outcomes of conflict and the frustration and tensions individuals involved in conflict situations experience can be problematic (Brown, 1983; Dubrin, 1981; Krech et al., 1970). Individuals may experience emotional and physical distress in the aftermath of a conflict situation. Time, energy, money and materials may be invested in resolving a conflict when they would be more profitably spent in other ways within the organization. The aftermath of the conflict may have financial costs. For example, workers disgruntled with the solution to the problem might sabotage the work of the organization. If the conflict has been a particularly distressing one, workers may experience so much tension that they cannot be effective in their work. Distress may interfere with their thinking processes to the

point where they cannot see alternate pathways to a goal or consider all options in order to make wise decisions.

Educational settings. The outcomes of conflict management techniques used in educational settings bear a good deal of resemblance to those used in non-educational settings. Evidence of both positive and negative outcomes are reported by researchers.

Working together to seek a solution to a conflict situation can build better relationships in which individuals can be more productive (Maidment, 1987). Generating new ideas and reaching specific goals are positive outcomes of some conflict situations (Formisano, 1987). Caldwell and Byers (1988) found that teachers were more committed to their work in schools where principals handled conflict effectively. Conflict can lead to creative problem-solving, positive action and doing what is best for students in the school (Lindelow & Scott, 1989).

The negative outcomes of conflict situations are basically the same as those experienced in non-educational settings. Individuals embroiled in conflict situations are exerting energy which cannot be directed toward their job responsibilities. Anger and frustration which result from the resolution of the conflict interfere with job performance (Lindelow & Scott, 1989). Outcomes of conflict resolution may include the expenditure of time and money which could more profitably be spent elsewhere.

Conclusions. Research has confirmed that positive and negative outcomes can be expected as a result of conflict management techniques employed by managers. Positive outcomes include creative solutions to the situation, increased cooperation among parties in conflict and achievement of goals. Negative outcomes include tensions which lead to poor performance by workers and unreasonable expenditures of money, time and energy.

Conclusions

Conceptualization of study. I was interested in learning more about how principals managed conflicts which arose in their work situations, how successful these techniques were and the outcomes principals experienced from conflict situations.

A good deal of information was available about how conflict was experienced by those who held differing goals or values. It was clear that tension and frustration was experienced by those in conflict and those feelings could be strong enough to be problematic. There was a good deal of evidence that conflict situations could have positive outcomes as well as negative ones. Many conflict management techniques had been identified by researchers and managers were encouraged to develop skills in this area as no one technique was effective in every situation.

I felt that active principals could give me the best information about the conflict situations they were dealing

with at work and, therefore, decided to draw the research sample from that group. I anticipated that the information received from the principals in my study would provide a basis for comparison with the findings of other researchers to help me explore the area of conflict management in schools. I was particularly interested in discovering techniques which allowed principals to resolve conflict situations in ways which maximized positive outcomes and minimized negative ones.

A review of the literature revealed a great deal of information about the nature of conflict and a fair bit of information about conflict management techniques. Information was also available relevant to educational settings. There was not, however, a lot of information specific to principals and this study was designed to explore how principals manage conflict.

Design of the study. I decided to do a descriptive study and to use interviews as the means of data collection. I felt this would provide richer descriptions and allow more extensive consideration of how principals experienced conflict. I also decided to include principals from all grade levels in an attempt to make the findings more broadly applicable. Because other researchers had found that conflict could elicit strong emotional reactions, I decided to ask principals to choose conflict situations they wished to report in the interviews.

I decided that the following aspects of these conflict

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situations would be helpful in understanding how principals managed conflict:

1. Participants -- what was the role of the person(s) involved in the conflict situation with the principal?

2. Type of conflict -- what was the source of disagreement between the principal and the other person(s) in the conflict?

3. Management techniques -- what actions did the principal take to resolve the conflict?

4. Outcomes -- what did the principal see as positive and negative outcomes of the conflict situation?

5. Ratings -- how successful did the principal feel he/she had been in solving the conflict?

I hypothesized that relationships might exist between these variables which would provide insight into the area of conflict management.

Chapter 3

Plan of the Study

This chapter outlines the design of the study, a description of the sample and an explanation of the analysis of the data collected.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to discover what principals knew about conflict management and how they went about dealing with conflict in their work lives. I was also interested in knowing if the conflict management techniques identified by principals in the sample studied were similar to techniques identified by researchers in other studies. Borg and Gall (1983) explain that descriptive studies provide an opportunity to describe how things are being experienced at the time of the study. I decided, therefore, to conduct a descriptive study with interviews being used as the method of collecting data. This naturalistic paradigm seemed the most appropriate to obtain the information sought.

In lectures at The University of Alberta in the spring

of 1987, Dr. Max van Manen explained phenomenology as a study of lived experience. He presented the ideas of an impressive array of philosophers and scientists who believe there is much to be learned about how the world works from intense study and contemplation of how experiences are felt, perceived and lived by individuals. It became clear that useful information could be gained by having principals relate their "lived experience" in dealing with conflict and studying those reports to understand what those experiences had revealed about how principals handle conflict.

John Flanagan developed the critical incident technique and described it in the Psychological Bulletin in 1954. Flanagan believed that useful information could be gained about the behavior and skills of individuals by having someone describe a critical incident in which that individual had been involved. Although Flanagan's original work involved supervisors reporting critical incidents with workers, the technique has been used frequently by researchers in the field of education to gain insight into the behavior of educators dealing with educational problems.

In designing this study, I believed that the field of phenomenology and Flanagan's work supported the view that valuable information could be gained by investigating incidents experienced by principals as they dealt with conflict in their schools. Therefore, I made the decision to collect data by way of interviews with principals in which

they would be asked to relate incidents of conflict with adults in their work environments. These interviews would be analyzed to identify conflict management techniques used by principals. Principals would also be asked to discuss the success of the resolution of the conflict. I thus hoped to identify successful techniques used by principals to handle conflict.

Borg and Gall (1983) outline suggestions for researchers to follow in order to obtain the most reliable information from interviews. They stress the advantage of interviews over questionnaires in allowing the researcher to obtain more complete information. A researcher has an opportunity in an interview to probe for more complete information, to ask clarifying questions and to be given negative information which the respondent might hesitate to write on a questionnaire.

I chose to use semistructured interviews as the method of data collection to insure the collection of as much information as possible from the respondent. I used open-ended questions and took care to prepare the interview questions so they would not lead the respondents to particular answers. I was aware that conflict issues are often fraught with tensions and, therefore, asked the respondents to choose the incidents they wished to report in order to remove as much as possible the threat from the situation. Interviews were arranged at a time and place convenient for the respondent and

I took care to explain the study and the respondent's part in it. I personally conducted all interviews to insure consistency and confidentiality.

I decided to request respondents to allow interviews to be tape recorded and all agreed to do so. I wished to have full transcripts of the interviews in order to be able to study them thoroughly. This allowed several reviews of the transcripts in which different aspects could be studied. It also allowed checking for accuracy and ready access to all the information during the analysis.

Trustworthiness

In order to insure that the findings of a research project are trustworthy, consideration must be given to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

The issue of credibility was addressed in this study to insure that the findings of the study corresponded to the actual situations observed. This was achieved, first of all, by devoting as much time as the respondent required to complete the interview. I spaced interview appointments so that sufficient time was available to complete the interview comfortably. The interviews were taped which allowed for the collection of a great deal of data which were readily available for rechecking and further analysis. I conducted all the interviews personally which insured opportunities for me to collect as much data as I needed.

Transferability of the research findings was a concern for me. I addressed it by collecting thick descriptions of the incidents reported. This was achieved by tape recording the interviews and by asking questions during the interviews to clarify unclear information and provide more complete information about the incidents described. When choosing the sample to be studied, I took care to have principals representing all levels of public schools and both sexes. This should enhance the transferability of the findings to a broader spectrum of principals in various work situations.

Dependability implies the stability of the findings although one must also consider that the naturalistic paradigm assumes changes as the research progresses. The dependability of the findings was increased by gathering information by way of recorded interviews, note-taking during interviews and completion of a short questionnaire by respondents. I retained notes of the steps taken to select the sample, plan and execute the study. Therefore, replication of the study is possible. During the time I was conducting the interviews, I reviewed the taped interviews periodically to determine if the information gathered would yield dependable data.

Confirmability of the data collected in the study was a consideration. I addressed this issue by comparing data collected in the interviews. It was evident that similar information was being given by different respondents. Information from respondents was also compared to findings

from the literature reviewed. I judged the data being collected to be appropriate for the analysis required.

Ethical Considerations

It is, of course, extremely important that research be conducted in an ethical manner. The plan for this study was submitted to an Ethics Review Committee at The University of Alberta and was approved. A description of the steps taken to insure adherence to an appropriate code of ethics follows.

Superintendents were contacted by letter (Appendix A) and asked for permission to contact principals in their district to invite them to participate in the study. This letter explained the nature of the study and what would be required of the principals involved. Superintendents were invited to contact the researcher if they required further information. They were asked to complete an approval form (Appendix B). This form made provision for superintendents to designate principals to be interviewed if they so wished.

Principals were contacted by letter (Appendix C) and invited to participate in the study. This letter outlined what would be expected of participants and assured them that the information they gave would be kept confidential. Confidentiality was assured by having all interviews conducted by the researcher who also transcribed the interview tapes. Transcripts identified respondents only as "P" to indicate "principal." Principals were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix D).

The demographic data collected at each interview were coded by number and the code is known only to the researcher.

These precautions were taken to insure that participants could give informed consent and that confidentiality was maintained. A further precaution was taken when reporting the results -- information of a sensitive nature which might identify a particular individual was disguised in the report to protect the identity of the individual.

Principals were not coerced in any way to participate in the study. They were free to withdraw at any time. I answered any questions from participants openly and honestly and did everything possible to put respondents at ease. Respondents were given my address and telephone number and were free to make contact at any time should questions or concerns arise.

Sample

I interviewed principals from New Brunswick public schools for this study. I contacted three New Brunswick superintendents by letter to request permission to contact principals in their districts to participate in the study. They were given an opportunity to designate principals to be contacted if they so wished. No superintendent designated principals although one asked to be informed of the names of principals who would be contacted. I honored this request.

I chose districts to provide as broad a spectrum as possible of school settings from which to interview

principals. One district was predominantly urban centered in a city of 50 000 population. The other two districts were predominantly rural with district offices and schools clustered in the district's central town of about 5 000 population and smaller schools operating in outlying areas.

I invited a total of 22 principals to participate in this study. I took care to solicit participation from equal numbers of elementary, junior high and senior high school principals. I invited principals in both rural and urban schools to participate. As well, I made attempts to have both male and female principals represented. As women principals are very much a minority in New Brunswick, I had to chose them specifically in order to insure representation. At the time I was arranging interviews, public controversy had arisen concerning incidents in two of the schools in the urban district. As this superintendent had asked for a list of principals being contacted, I judged it prudent to avoid contacting the principals of the two schools concerned for fear of jeopardizing the research project. Using these parameters, I chose principals at random to make up a balanced group of participants.

I invited the designated principals to participate by way of a letter. A total of 13 principals agreed to participate in the study, 11 males and 2 females. The breakdown of the grade levels at which the principals worked is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Grade Levels of the Schools of the Participating Principals

Grade Level	Number of Principals
1-5	1
1-6	5
1-9	1
7-9	2
9-12	1
10-12	3

The principals who agreed to participate in the study presented the following profile. Average years of experience as a teacher was 23.3 with a range of 10 to 29 years. Average years of experience as an administrator was 16.5 years with a range of 3 to 24 years. Eighteen bachelor's degrees and seven Master's degrees were held by study participants. Five participants held two bachelor's degrees. The areas of specialty in the bachelor's degrees included History, Economics, Education, English, Philosophy, Industrial Arts, Science, Guidance, Physical Education, Psychology and Arts. The areas of specialty in the Master's degrees included History, Reading and Administration.

Participants were asked to identify the areas in which they had the most teaching/training experience. People reported training in such areas as History, Social Studies, Language Arts, Mathematics, Carpentry and Biology/Science. Principals also reported teaching experience in such subject areas as Physical Education, English, Drafting and Health. No participant reported any special training in conflict management techniques. One participant, however, had done readings in the topics of self-motivation and leadership.

Due to the enormous complexity of human interaction, any study using human participants has a tremendous potential for being unable to adequately measure appropriate variables. In this study, respondents were asked to relate and comment on conflict incidents they had experienced. Should they recall

those incidents inaccurately or perceive the actions and feelings of other participants incorrectly, the findings would be biased. Trustworthiness issues were addressed and are reviewed earlier in this chapter. Steps taken in this area should improve the validity of the findings.

Data Collection

Interviews with principals followed a semi-structured format. Principals were first asked to provide some demographic data (Appendix E). I then used a series of open-ended questions (Appendix F) to solicit the information required. I attempted to remain as nonintrusive as possible so as not to influence the information given by the interviewee. I did this to allow the principals to report how they had actually dealt with the conflict situation without being unduly influenced by expectations of how they should deal with the conflict. Each principal agreed to have the interview recorded on tape. I also took notes as the interview proceeded.

In the interview, principals were asked to reflect on incidents in which they had been involved in a conflict with another adult in their work situation. They were asked to identify the role of the other adult and to relate the details of the conflict situation. Principals were then asked to discuss positive and negative outcomes of the conflict and to rate the success of resolution of the conflict on a scale of

1 - 5 where 1 was not successful and 5 was very successful. The tapes of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed by me to identify conflict management techniques used by principals and how successful principals felt these techniques to be.

Data Analysis

A review of the literature relating to conflict management revealed that various researchers had been able to identify conflict management techniques and suggest situations in which various techniques were appropriate. It was also clear that researchers believed conflict situations had positive and negative aspects. In preparing to analyze the data, I considered what previous researchers had reported and what might be learned from the data at hand.

I decided that the following aspects of these conflict situations would be helpful in understanding how principals managed conflict:

1. Participants -- what was the role of the person(s) involved in the conflict situation with the principal?
2. Type of conflict -- what was the source of disagreement between the principal and the other person(s) in the conflict?
3. Management techniques -- what actions did the principal take to resolve the conflict?
4. Outcomes -- what did the principal see as positive and negative outcomes of the conflict situation?
5. Ratings -- how successful did the principal feel he/she

had been in solving the conflict?

I hypothesized that relationships might exist between these variables which would provide insight into the area of conflict management.

I transcribed and studied the interview tapes. I searched for and noted answers to the five questions in the previous paragraph. I attempted to categorize management techniques in the language of the respondent or the researcher rather than being too heavily influenced by terms used by other researchers. I believed that this technique would give me a better chance to explore what the respondents actually said rather than what other researchers had said. The categories I identified were then related to those presented by other researchers and comparisons were drawn.

When all tapes had been analyzed, responses were tallied and considered to discover if patterns were present. I discovered that principals had reported four broad general areas of conflict management techniques and these were compared to those identified by other researchers. Frequencies were tabulated and studied to discover trends. Management techniques used were related to the type of conflict to explore the interaction of these variables.

Summary

The naturalistic paradigm was chosen as the research design for this study. It was desirable to know how principals experienced conflict in their work lives to

discover if their experiences supported the findings of other researchers in conflict management. Principals were interviewed and interview transcripts were analyzed to explore answers to key questions about what led to conflict situations and how principals dealt with those conflicts. These findings were compared with the findings of other researchers to discover commonalities.

I conducted all interviews personally in a manner which took into account ethical considerations. Study participants were fully informed of the nature of the study and were free to withdraw from the study at any time. By collecting thick descriptions, conducting the interviews with care, and reviewing the interview material frequently, I addressed concerns about the trustworthiness of the study.

The participants of this study were chosen to represent a broad spectrum of principals in the public schools of New Brunswick. Principals interviewed worked in both rural and urban areas and dealt with schools covering all grades from one through twelve.

Chapter 4

Principals Reflect on Conflict Management

Principals interviewed were asked to report two situations in which they were involved in a conflict with an adult in their work situation. Interviews were analyzed to explore the role of the other person in the conflict, the type of conflict, techniques used to manage the conflict situation, positive and negative outcomes of the conflict and a rating given by principals on the success of the resolution of the conflict. Each of these factors will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

Conflict Participants

Principals were asked to report on conflicts they had experienced with adults in their work situation. Eleven conflicts were reported with parents and ten were reported with teachers. One conflict each was reported with a School Board, a school secretary, a Superintendent and a School Board member.

Type of Conflict

Conflict occurs when the conflicting parties disagree about something. The most common type of conflict reported by principals centered around power/authority issues. For example, disagreements arose between parents and principals when principals imposed behavior requirements on students which they were unwilling to accept. Teachers who did not like their teaching assignments questioned the authority of the principal to make those assignments.

Ten incidents involved disagreements over who should control student behavior while the student was at school. One example involved a student who was causing a disturbance in the school cafeteria at noon hour. The student was sent from the area and assigned to another area in the school. He refused to report to that area and was supported by his parents who took the matter to the School Board. The question to be resolved then came to be who had authority over the student's behavior while he was at school.

Another incident involved a disagreement over who should control academic matters in the school. School staff had decided a student needed to repeat a grade. The student's parents insisted that the student be moved on and argued with the principal about the student's placement.

One principal reported a power struggle over the hiring of a teacher. Interviews had been held to fill a vacancy in the school and the principal and School Board members had been

present. The principal made a recommendation to the Board but learned later that the teacher hired was not the teacher recommended by the principal.

Four incidents involved disagreements over procedures/processes to be followed. An example of this type of conflict occurred in a school where they were trying to develop a more satisfactory method of tracking daily attendance of students. The method suggested by the principal was problematic for some teachers who wanted a more satisfactory solution. Another principal reported a conflict with a School Board member who came to the school to complain about a problem instead of using the appropriate procedure of directing the complaint through the District Office.

Disagreements concerning teaching assignments were reported twice. An example of this occurred in a school where a teacher had been on leave and suggested to the principal that he would like a change in teaching assignment upon his return. Some changes had occurred at the school which would make the change a good solution to some staffing concerns that had developed. However, the returning teacher changed his mind and asked to be reassigned to his former position. The principal was faced with the problem of two teachers wanting the same job.

The remaining incidents involved job performance -- five of teachers and one each of a secretary and a principal. Typical of these incidents was a report by a principal whose

secretary was not completing assigned tasks satisfactorily. Letters were not typed promptly and forms such as teacher attendance sheets were not completed as they should have been by the secretary. The job performance of teachers was a concern of principals. For example, one principal found a teacher's classes poorly directed with inadequate lesson plans and too little time on task in the classroom.

Management Techniques

Principals reported a great variety of techniques which they used to settle the conflicts they had encountered. These have been clustered in broad general categories and each category will be explained and discussed more specifically.

Information exchange. Most incidents (21) included some form of information exchange. The types of activities principals reported in this category were directed toward establishing a data base of knowledge which they could call upon as they worked through the situation. Information was given and received by principals to help clarify the issue being addressed. They then used this information as they employed various other techniques to deal with the conflict.

The most common technique reported was gathering or providing information to the people involved. One principal discussed an incident in which parents had disagreed with the school's decision to have their child repeat a grade. The parents appealed the decision to the superintendent and the principal contacted the superintendent to discuss the matter.

A copy of the report card was forwarded to the superintendent and the principal reported: "He was given those . . . facts. We, as well, indicated that we were ready to meet with him at any point in time to go through the report card and discuss it with him, discuss the child and so forth." Most principals reported attempts to ascertain the facts and details of a situation as early as possible.

Another common means of information exchange which principals reported was talking over the problem. This allowed them to hear both sides and to clarify the positions of the conflicting parties. One principal was dealing with a job assignment for a teacher who wanted to return to a job he had previously had but which was now being done by another teacher on staff. The principal was weighing the advantages and disadvantages to the school and to the two teachers involved in the decision he would make. He planned to talk with both teachers. "I find if you talk to a person privately, I find that that helps an awful lot," he stated.

Information exchange provided an opportunity for principals to hear both sides of the issue. One principal discussed a situation in which a student athlete was not performing academically and was temporarily suspended from the team. This led to a conflict with the student's parents who did not support the school's decision. The conflict participants began to meet: "Then we started to look at some of the other issues . . . we . . . became clear in the office

. . . me from their end of it, [them] from the school end of it," reported the principal.

Principals also reported information exchange as a means to clarify expectations and issues. A principal reported a situation where he had been visiting a classroom and was unhappy with some of the things he saw going on there. In discussing the situation with the teacher later, they explored the concept of teaching and what the principal wanted in the classroom. Principals who mentioned clarifying issues made it clear that they had difficulty satisfactorily finding solutions for conflict situations in which the issue was unclear. One principal mentioned specifically the importance of communication and openness in settling disputes. It was clear from the interviews that many other principals believed these to be important factors.

Coercion. The second most frequent cluster of techniques (16) involved some form of coercion. The most common force exerted was the use of power or authority held by someone in the situation. An example of this occurred in a situation reported by a principal where a student had been disciplined and the parent disagreed with the discipline. The parent came to the school and expressed his disapproval to the principal in front of other teachers and students. The principal reported: "My technique for defusing that particular situation was to have him come into another classroom whereupon I shut the door and used authority in which he was

to learn not to come into the school and rave at me about calling in the police or else I would do the same thing the next time he came into the school."

Principals often possessed some power or authority over others in the conflict and it was common to have principals report using that power to bring about resolution of conflict situations. An example of this was reported by a principal who was dealing with a teacher who had dealt with a discipline incident in an inappropriate manner. The teacher had disciplined some children for teasing another child. The discipline administered was a severe lecture which resulted in two children being so distraught at home that night that the parents telephoned the principal and came to the school the next day to discuss the matter. After meeting with the parents, the principal called the teacher into the interview and reported this action: "I told them in front of her that this would never happen again and that from now on . . . any problems like that would have to go to either the vice-principal or myself."

Several principals reported incidents in which attempts were made to resolve the conflict by appealing to someone who was perceived to have more power or authority. This step was often not initiated by the principal but by others involved in the conflict who perceived that School Boards or superintendents had the authority to overturn school decisions which they did not like. Although not always of the

principal's choosing, these appeals were factors in the management of several reported conflicts. For example, one principal was dealing with a consistently disruptive student and arranged an interview with the student's mother. During the interview, the mother became upset about what she was being told. The principal described her behavior: "So she stormed out of the office and said, 'Well, there's no help here. I'll go to the Superintendent.' So she did just that." An example of a principal appealing to a higher authority was reported by a principal who was dealing with a student discipline problem where he had to call in the parents. At that time, he alerted the Superintendent to the problem by preparing a written report.

Negotiation. The third most frequent cluster of techniques (12) involved actions aimed at negotiating a settlement. The most frequent of these actions involved exploring or offering options. One such situation involved a principal who had received complaints from parents about a teacher in the school who was having difficulty relating positively to the parents of her students. The principal approached the teacher and talked about ways this might be improved.

Principals reported seeking compromise positions. In one such incident, a principal had been dealing with a student who was a chronic behavior problem. Several measures had been attempted but failed to correct the student's behavior. The

situation had escalated to where the student and his parents were appearing before a School Board meeting where the principal was requesting a school suspension of the student. However, the principal was seeking a compromise to this serious measure: "We're also recommending to the Board that the boy be permitted to write his June exams." The principal was attempting to uphold school discipline while still allowing the student an opportunity to complete his courses.

Some principals reported incidents of conciliatory action taken either by them or by others in the conflict. One principal reported an incident in which a student had been refused permission to leave school early. The parent disagreed and telephoned the principal to complain in a rude and disrespectful manner. The principal went on to report a later incident: "He appeared at my office door and . . . apologized for his behavior over the phone . . . and the way he spoke to me and said he realized that the rule that I had made was the one that was the best." When describing such actions, principals noted the importance of rebuilding trust and confidence after a disagreement has occurred to enable the parties involved to continue working together.

One principal mentioned the use of rewards as a tool to achieve settlement of a disagreement at the school. The principal had been working with a group of teachers to set up a new program at the school. Toward the end of this work, staffing changes occurred and it seemed that one of the group

of teachers who had planned the program would not be able to have a teaching assignment for that program. The principal had talked with the teachers and explained the difficulty and asked them for possible solutions. He explained: "I'm going to leave it in their hands and let them try to come up with some solution and I am, of course, leaning toward a certain thing myself and I'm going to hold up some rewards, if you want to call them that, to try to get the solution that I would like to see."

Intervention. The fourth most frequent cluster of techniques (10) involved intervention strategies. The most frequent of these involved third-party intervention. One principal reported a conflict between a parent and a principal over whether a student should be promoted to the next grade. The principal suggested having the student tested by the remedial reading teacher who would then make a recommendation based on the student's reading scores. The principal and the parents agreed that they would accept the recommendation of this third party.

Some principals reported activities aimed at soliciting support for a particular point of view. One principal described a situation where this worked very well. The principal had been observing one of the teachers at the school and made some suggestions for improvement in teaching techniques. The teacher was upset by these requests and sought support from colleagues on staff. Several teachers

began to feel uncomfortable about the principal's requests which they were only hearing about from one side. The principal was bound by ethics not to discuss the situation with other staff. The principal reported: "I began . . . to do a bit of lobbying with key people on staff . . . explain . . . that you have the best interest of everyone at heart, students, teachers, the profession and so on." The principal was able to solicit support from staff to look at the broader picture and understand that there were at least two points of view to be considered.

Other techniques. The remaining techniques were reported infrequently and were more difficult to classify as sharing a common element. The first of these might be grouped under action taken which the principal felt would help solve the conflict. Principals reported attempting to deal with expressed concerns, following up to see if the problem was corrected and confronting issues rather than ignoring them. They also mentioned a belief in the importance of being proactive rather than reactive when possible. One principal mentioned the importance of maintaining objectivity in conflict situations and not allowing oneself to be drawn into personality battles. He maintained that people could not solve problems when they became highly emotionally involved in the situation. He saw personality struggles as a danger in that they clouded the issues and made it difficult to identify the issue which needed to be resolved.

One principal reported an incident which was instructive in that it seemed to illustrate all the nonproductive ways to resolve a conflict situation. The superintendent and the principal disagreed on the job performance of a teacher at the school. Initially the teacher was asked to make some changes in his work and he attempted to do so. There then began a series of incidents where the principal felt the teacher concerned was not given appropriate support and help from District Office personnel to implement the changes they wanted. District Office personnel stated that complaints had been received from other teachers but would not name the teachers. A letter critical of the teacher was copied to another staff member. An accusatory letter was sent to the teacher from District Office personnel. Such tactics served only to make the situation so uncomfortable that the conflicting parties could not work together toward a solution and the teacher concerned felt compelled to withdraw and accept a teaching position in another discipline. The principal's report indicated that the management techniques used left the teacher concerned feeling that his work was not valued and made it very difficult for him to continue to work under those circumsta ces. It was evident from this report that techniques such as withholding information, humiliation of others and making judgments and accusations did not help solve conflict situations in a satisfactory manner.

Some principals reported withdrawing from situations as

a management technique. One principal described an incident in which a parent came to see him about a discipline measure imposed on his son. The parent disagreed with the discipline administered and was very verbal in expressing his feelings. The principal explained his response: "If one understands the intensity of emotional relationships, they cannot last forever. Be willing to take them, let him burn himself out emotionally and at a certain point, they'll become rational and maybe hear your . . . point of view . . . in the majority of emotional-type confrontations like that, my style would be let the person burn himself out. Don't take personal offense."

Conflict Management and Type of Conflict

I considered whether principals used particular conflict management techniques depending on the type of conflict in which they were involved. The size of the sample made it difficult to draw valid conclusions in this regard. However, the analysis provided some interesting information.

Information exchange was heavily utilized in all types of conflict a total of 21 times. Negotiation and intervention were also used in all types of conflict 12 and 10 times respectively. Coercion was used a total of 16 times in all types of conflict except teaching assignment. A broad range of other techniques, such as withdrawing, were used a small number of times in power/authority and job performance conflicts.

It was common for principals to use more than one technique in a conflict situation. For example, one principal dealt with a situation in which parents challenged an academic decision made by school staff. The principal used information exchange and intervention to arrive at a resolution which all parties could accept.

There was no clear pattern evident which would indicate that principals always used a particular technique with a particular type of conflict. It was uncommon, however, to find a situation where information exchange did not take place. Identifying patterns is complicated in this study by the relatively small sample used.

Outcomes

Principals were asked to report what they felt were positive and negative outcomes of the conflict. They reported 71 positive outcomes and 46 negative ones.

Positive outcomes. Many principals indicated that they had learned valuable lessons from these incidents. For example, one principal reported an incident in which a classroom teacher recommended that a student not be promoted to the next grade. The parents protested vehemently and took the matter to the Superintendent when the principal refused to overrule the teacher's recommendation. Eventually the disagreement was settled by bringing in a third party, the district's remedial reading teacher, whose recommendation was

accepted by both parties. This principal reported learning the importance of supporting the teacher's position as a positive outcome. The principal also felt learning to use third-party intervention was a positive outcome.

A principal reported an incident in which a teacher had used force to subdue a student who was participating in a noon hour activity in an area of the school where the teacher was supervising. The student's guardian felt the force had been excessive and lodged a complaint with the principal. The teacher was disciplined for this action by District Office personnel. The principal felt he understood the teacher's position better after this incident and that he had a clearer understanding of his role in such a situation.

An incident involving the disciplining of an unruly student taught one principal the value of face-to-face consultation. The student had been persistently disobedient and was assigned detentions as a punishment. The parents objected to the punishment and transferred the student out of the school at the end of the school year. The principal had dealt with the parents on the telephone and reported: "I've learned from it . . . rather than deal with certain things like that over the phone, that face-to-face consultation works a great deal more to your advantage."

Principals reported conflicts as a chance to really learn about the school and to learn more about staff. In general, principals saw the conflicts as opportunities to learn better

ways to do things and to learn more about the people around them.

Principals also reported that they felt others had learned from the conflict. One principal felt the parents involved had learned how to handle their child better. The student concerned had been disciplined for writing profanities on a get-well card for a classmate who had been hospitalized. The parents disagreed with the punishment and challenged the principal. In ensuing discussions, the principal felt that the parents came to understand that "their child needs a lot of direction." He felt this to be a positive outcome.

One principal related an incident that occurred in the school where he was principal. The staff had developed a high degree of collegiality over the years. The principal was away on leave for a year and this atmosphere began to break down. The returning principal talked with District Office staff and school staff to try to understand why this change was taking place and to try to take action to reverse the trend. The principal felt that this situation had been a good learning experience for the teachers on staff as they learned about "expectations of them in terms of the teaching-learning situation" and about being treated fairly. This principal felt that teachers were happier and morale was better in a school where these elements were present.

A situation arose in one school where a specialist teacher who was popular in a personal sense with many parents

and students was doing an unsatisfactory job in the classroom. The principal supervised the teacher and insisted on improvements in the classroom work. The teacher solicited support from individuals who badgered the principal about his demands. The principal held firm on his demands and felt that teachers and parents learned to respect that he would not defend incompetence.

It is clear, then, that people other than the principal learned things which would make them more effective in their roles as a result of the conflict situations.

Principals reported outcomes which they saw as being positive to the school and its authority. One principal reported that the incident had been successful from the school's point of view because the school's authority had won out. The school had disciplined a student and the parent had objected to the School Board. The Board upheld the school's action, thus reinforcing the authority assigned to school personnel.

One principal reported that the resolution of a conflict led to improvements that went in all directions. The principal had supervised a teacher and asked for changes in teaching strategies. The teacher did not respond well to these suggestions and the principal invested a good deal of time and effort in working with her. He also discussed teaching strategies with a broad range of other staff members to address concerns which had developed throughout the school.

In the long run, the principal felt it was well worth the effort as he reported that many staff made changes in their classrooms. Teachers set higher expectations for themselves and this was evident in the community.

Other principals reported positive outcomes of clearing the air and repairing the relationship between the family and the school. It is clear that a number of principals saw reinforcing and restatement of the power and authority of the school as a positive outcome of some of their conflict situations.

Negative outcomes. Negative outcomes were also cited by principals. A number of these affected the principal personally. One principal reported the frustration of trying to collect all the information surrounding the incident as a negative outcome. He was dealing with a student who had been referred to the office for a discipline matter. In meetings with parents, superintendent and School Board, he explained, it seemed there was always someone absent from any particular meeting who had important information needed to make an appropriate decision.

A principal's trust in the School Board was destroyed in one incident and it took a long time to restore that trust. The principal had made a recommendation to the School Board concerning the hiring of a teacher and the Board had hired someone else. The principal had always enjoyed a good relationship with the Board and this incident caused a lot of

strain in the relationship for some time.

Principals reported uneasy personal relationships with some individuals with whom they had had conflicts-- some of these improved and some relationships were never repaired. Some principals experienced feelings of distress because they were not able to resolve a conflict or because the methods of resolution they used had caused other people discomfort.

Principals reported outcomes which affected others negatively. Teachers may have viewed the principal as indecisive in one incident reported. The principal was attempting to establish a better system for monitoring student attendance. The first system did not work well and another had to be devised. The principal speculated that this change might have appeared to staff as though he couldn't make up his mind.

One teacher lost his job in the resolution of a disagreement over his classroom performance. The teacher was unable to meet the standards of performance set by the principal. The teacher had been popular, however, with a number of teachers on staff and his leaving caused feelings of resentment toward the principal.

One principal reported a conflict which led to a loss of contact between the principal and the School Board member who represented the community where his school was located. The Board member came to the school with a complaint which should have been channeled through the Superintendent. After the

Superintendent called this matter to the attention of the Board member, he ceased all communication with the school principal.

Conflict situations were also reported to have an effect on the overall school and/or school system. One principal reported that nobody won in the particular conflict -- everyone felt frustrated and unsatisfied when it was over. The conflict developed around a student who transferred into the school and soon showed himself to be a discipline problem. One day the student left school and went home during the middle of the day to avoid being disciplined for his misbehavior. Several adults from the student's family arrived at the school and tried to intimidate the principal and vice-principal. In retrospect, the principal believed he should have handled the situation differently by working with the student and the adults in his home to stress the importance of the student remaining in school and of schools in general. It was obvious that the family had had bad experiences with schools and this incident only served to reinforce their belief that schools were bad places.

The transfer of a French Immersion teacher from a school was a cause for concern with one principal. The teacher had been told she would be transferred to another school and she did not wish to leave her present school. She felt the teachers' collective agreement supported her wish to stay in her present school and launched a grievance. If she remained

in the school, she would have to teach an English class and an English teacher would be forced to accept a transfer. The principal was concerned that such a move would stir up the Anglophone/Francophone job controversy that erupts sometimes in New Brunswick and would result in disruptions in staff relations.

One principal worried about a drop in enrollment and the school's loss of public image when parents withdrew their children from the school as a result of a conflict situation. Parents objected to discipline measures taken against their child so transferred their children to another school. The principal felt this move reflected negatively on the public's view of the school.

Principals presented a great number of outcomes from the conflicts with which they had dealt. It was very evident that they considered the situations valuable learning experiences but were concerned about negative impacts also.

Ratings

Principals were asked to rate the success of the resolution of the conflict situations they reported on a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 was not successful and 5 was very successful. A total of 25 incidents were rated. The modal response was 4. Only 4 incidents were rated below 3 in success (1 at 0; 1 at 1; 2 at 2). Therefore, the incidents principals chose to report were rated in the range of successful to very successful (6 at 3; 2 at 3.5; 10 at 4; 3 at 5).

This might mean that the principals interviewed were very successful at managing conflict or that they chose to report mostly those incidents which they felt they had resolved successfully. It is also important to remember that the ratings were assigned by the principals involved -- the other party(ies) to the conflict might very well have rated it differently. It is interesting to note that one principal gave a resolution a rating of 2 but commented that a management-oriented individual might very well rate it as 4. Also of interest is the fact that resolutions were rated successful even though principals were readily able to identify negative outcomes.

Summary

The most common adult participants in conflicts with principals were parents and teachers. Types of conflict included power struggles, disagreements over procedures or processes and controversies over job performance. A broad range of management techniques were cited. The most common were: information exchange, coercion, negotiation and intervention. Most principals reported both positive and negative outcomes of the conflict. A common belief was that they learned from the experience and were better able to do their jobs because of the knowledge gained. Principals were asked to rate the success of the resolution of the conflict on a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 was not successful and 5 was very successful. The modal response was 4.

Chapter 5

Implications of the Findings

This study investigated how principals deal with conflicts they encounter with adults in their work situation. A descriptive study was designed which identified the role of the other person(s) in the conflict, the type of conflict, conflict management techniques used by principals, positive and negative outcomes of the conflict and the principal's rating of the success of the resolution of the conflict. Data were collected by way of interviews with principals in New Brunswick public schools. The interviews were analyzed to identify these components of the conflict situations reported by principals. Components identified were compared to findings reported by other researchers to determine if the findings of this study supported other research. It was found that the information gained in this study did support the findings of other researchers. Conflict management techniques used by New Brunswick principals were commonly reported as being used by managers in other studies.

It is clear that principals experience conflict in their work lives. The principals interviewed had no difficulty relating incidents in which they had dealt with people whose goals and values differed from theirs. Kagan, Havemann and Segal (1984) mention unpleasant emotions resulting from conflict situations -- such unpleasant emotions as anger, frustration and uncertainty -- were reported often by interviewees.

The challenge faced by principals is attempting to deal with conflict in ways which will maximize the positive results and minimize the negative results of conflict situations. Principals readily identified positive and negative results of their conflicts, thus confirming that both exist. Interviews also confirmed that principals employ a broad range of techniques to deal with the conflicts they encounter in their work lives.

Relation to Previous Research

A review of the literature identified several typologies which researchers had used to generalize conflict management techniques they had identified. Each researcher's typology is helpful in providing insight into the management of conflict. The typology presented by Steers (1981), who used the work of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and Thomas (1977), seems to provide a good generalization of conflict management techniques employed by the principals interviewed. Steers identified competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding

and accommodating as modes of resolving conflict.

When principals reported various forms of information exchange, they were attempting to gather information which could be used to collaborate with conflicting parties to arrive at appropriate solutions. Collaborating also suggests problem-solving and principals reported frequently attempts to problem-solve with conflicting parties. Such activities as clarifying positions, asking for suggestions and talking over the problem were reported by principals as techniques they used to problem-solve with conflicting parties. Thomas suggests that collaborating ranks highest as the mode which best combines assertiveness (attempting to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (attempting to satisfy the other party's concerns). This suggests a win-win solution where both conflicting parties feel they have achieved their ends -- surely a highly desirable outcome to any conflict.

Win-win solutions have the advantage of providing some positive outcomes for all parties to the conflict. The findings of this study and of other researchers indicate that these might include positive work relationships, the satisfaction of achieving a goal and increased commitment to the organization. People who experience such outcomes would be more likely to want to work through other conflict situations to create a work environment where problems are addressed rather than ignored. In such an environment, there should be support for trying new methods with the knowledge

that problems will be addressed as they arise. This should lead to a creative, dynamic work environment where improvements are often made.

Principals interviewed reported using coercion techniques which suggest a competing mode where the party with the most power wins the point. Principals reported using power in situations were they had the authority to do so. Examples of such situations include control of student behavior while at school and teaching assignments for staff. They did not, of course, always possess the power to achieve their goal. School Boards, for example, hire and fire teachers and their decisions are not under the principal's control.

Principals reported negotiating activities which match well with compromising and accommodating modes. For example, one principal reported attempting to negotiate teaching assignments with a group of teachers who had been planning a special program. He asked them to suggest appropriate assignments and intended to accommodate their plan. In another situation, a teacher agreed to a compromise in a disagreement whereby he would accept a change in job assignment if the School Board would provide some support materials for the new program he would be teaching. Other principals also reported compromising their demands and accommodating the needs of others when negotiating solutions to conflict.

The intervention strategies reported by principals might

fit into several modes -- they could be used to avoid the conflict, to gain power to compete more successfully or to gain support for a compromise.

Not surprisingly, few principals reported avoiding conflict as a conflict management technique they used. It is reasonable to assume that avoiding was a mode they used as it would be impossible to confront every disagreement which occurs in a work place. It seems reasonable to assume that principals would not choose to report on conflicts they had avoided as they would have difficulty describing management techniques they had used and rating the success of the resolution of the conflict. In fact, principals might have difficulty perceiving such incidents as being resolved at all.

The techniques reported by principals, therefore, supported the typology presented by Steers. I found it helpful to consider management techniques identified by principals in relation to Steers' typology. It helped me see commonalities in the various approaches and helped organize them into a framework that was more useful in a practical sense. Other researchers supported the view that principals should know a variety of management techniques and be able to choose the one best suited to the conflict situation. For example, a principal might attempt to resolve a conflict by suggesting a compromise solution. Should this solution prove unacceptable, it is simpler to choose from one of the other four categories suggested by Steers than to consider twenty

other options many of which share common themes. The principal could then devote energy to considering how to address the conflict by, for example, collaborating with the other party. Having chosen to collaborate, there are many ways in which to do that but all share the common theme of parties working together to achieve a satisfactory solution.

The more complex typologies were more confusing than they were helpful. For example, Moore (1986) includes negotiation, mediation and administrative/executive dispute resolution approach in his typology. These techniques are all based on the idea of managers and workers trying to arrive at a satisfactory solution to a problem by working together. There are many ways in which administrators/executives could choose to resolve conflict of which negotiation and mediation are two. It would seem more appropriate to group techniques under broader general categories which would share a general approach.

Principals interviewed confirmed that conflict had positive and negative aspects and readily identified conflict situations as good learning experiences. This supports the emerging philosophy that conflict can contribute to progress and creativity in an organization and is an essential part of a dynamic institution. Managers might, therefore, choose to initiate conflict within their organizations as a means to bring about positive change. For example, school staffs sometimes spend many years together in the same school and

they grow complacent and set in their roles and relationships. They oppose innovations and continue to do things the way they have always done, not because it is best for the students, but because it is more comfortable for them. Introducing conflict into this situation (new evaluation system, change in graduation requirements, etc.) can stir teachers to think about what they do and why they do it that way. This might lead to renewed commitment to the school and ideas about how the school could provide better service to its students.

This research supported the work of educational researchers who found principals to be concerned about the impact of conflict on interpersonal relations. Principals interviewed for this study often expressed concern about how a conflict had affected their relationship with the other party. They frequently expressed concern about trying to handle a situation in such a way as to maintain good relationships and if that was not possible, worried about the loss of the relationship and what they might do to restore it.

Principals displayed a high degree of awareness of the difficulties of running their schools when people could not get along. They showed an awareness of how negative emotions consumed energy and time which would better be spent on working toward positive goals. They often spoke of participants in a conflict feeling angry and frustrated. Many principals reported giving opportunities for expression of this anger and for working together to come up with an

appropriate solution to the problem.

It is evident from the interviews that principals used a variety of techniques to handle conflict. Although no principal reported training in conflict management techniques, they practised a variety of approaches in dealing with conflict. Principals displayed a number of skills which should lead to effective resolution: clarify the issue, listen to both sides, consider all the information, ask for solutions, solicit help from a third party -- all were used by principals in situations of conflict. The practical skills principals had gained were well matched to what the literature suggested they should know about dealing with conflict. The principals in the study confirmed the findings of researchers who maintain that managers need to know a variety of conflict management techniques and be skillful in choosing those techniques which best suit the particular situation with which they are dealing.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that consideration could usefully be given to the areas of inquiry outlined below.

Training programs for principals should include work on conflict and its management. Principals must deal with conflict situations in their work. Knowledge of conflict and conflict management techniques should help them deal more successfully with this aspect of their work. A better

understanding of the role conflict plays in an organization should help principals deal with conflict in ways which improve the school and avoid actions which escalate conflict and exacerbate its negative outcomes. Principals in this study were readily able to relate positive and negative outcomes of conflict situations and often made insightful comments about better ways to handle these situations. Inclusion of such insights in training programs should assist principals in handling conflict.

The incidents reported by principals were most instructive. I feel, therefore, that it would be useful to train principals using the case study approach. Once individuals had learned about the nature of conflict and conflict management techniques, it would be most helpful to apply this knowledge by doing case studies. This should develop skill in analyzing situations and choosing management techniques most likely to lead to the desired outcome. The principals in this study, in fact, provided case studies by relating incidents in which they had been involved. It was clear from the interviews that they had reflected on those incidents and were able to talk about changes they would make another time and what they had learned from the experience. It is likely that some of those same learnings could be achieved by using case studies of conflict situations with principals.

Useful information could be gained by studying completely

a specific conflict situation. Each party to the conflict should be interviewed and asked to explain their perspective of the incident and rate the success of the resolution. By comparing this information, determination could be made about how individuals might view the incident and its resolution differently. This might provide valuable insight into how to broaden the perspective on a conflict situation. In one interview for this study, a principal noted that his assessment of the success of the resolution of the conflict would probably not agree with the assessment of someone with a management perspective. This incident points out that there are different perspectives in any situation and it is wise to be aware of them.

A study to compare conflict management techniques used by men and women to determine if there are differences would be interesting. It is generally accepted that men and women are socialized differently. It would be helpful to determine if the techniques chosen to deal with conflict differ in male and female managers. The small sample used in this study did not allow for a comparison of this aspect. Formisano (1987) studied only female principals and found them to be relationship-oriented in their dealings with conflict. Her study might be a starting point to investigate this area.

The design of this study involved obtaining interviews with principals in a variety of work situations in order to identify a broad spectrum of conflict management techniques

used. It would be interesting to approach the study in a different way by choosing samples differently and attempting to determine what variables influenced conflict management techniques. For example, principals from small schools and large schools might be interviewed and the results compared to determine if the size of the school influenced the principal's choice of technique. Interesting studies might also be built around the amount of experience principals had in administration, urban versus rural schools and the nature of the conflict encountered. The small sample in this study did not allow for comparisons of this sort. However, it was interesting to note the kinds of conflicts reported that might indicate that significant differences do exist. For example, two elementary principals reported incidents which they were able to resolve satisfactorily in two or three days. Two high school principals, on the other hand, reported incidents which took months to resolve. Principals in smaller schools tended to know their parents whereas in large schools principals were often meeting parents for the first time when a conflict arose. It would be interesting to know if these differences were significant in terms of conflict management techniques chosen by principals.

Translating Findings into Practice

My decision to investigate conflict in the work lives of principals was rooted in a strong desire to learn how to deal more effectively with the conflicts I encounter in my work as

a high school principal. This study has provided a good deal of information which I can apply to my work.

First of all, I am now convinced that conflict situations can have positive outcomes. This removes some of my fears of situations blowing up and causing irreparable damage. I feel I will now be more comfortable addressing a conflict situation fully understanding that there will probably be both positive and negative outcomes. I now know that principals are able to deal with these outcomes. They are valuable learning experiences to help principals do their jobs better and they can lead to revitalization in schools. I feel I will be more inclined to address a conflict situation rather than avoiding it.

I feel that I have learned skills which will help me address conflicts more successfully. I have learned a great variety of management techniques which I can use in my work. I have had an excellent opportunity to hear how practising principals have applied those techniques and can relate that information to my own work. The incidents which principals related to me were representative of the kinds of situations I meet in my work and their actions were very relevant to my work.

I learned a great deal about the nature of conflict and the emotions experienced by individuals involved in it. This has helped me understand why people feel and act the way they do and should help me deal with this more appropriately. For

example, some individuals in a conflict situation become so emotionally agitated that they cannot think clearly enough to consider other solutions to the problem. In this instance, the person needs support and help to regain perspective so options can be considered. Study findings confirmed my belief in the importance of good working relationships and the necessity of restoring them should they be disrupted by conflict.

The information I have gained should be helpful to others. I will share it with my vice-principals and feel we can work together to develop skills and techniques which work well in our school setting. I shall also look for opportunities to share this knowledge with other staff members to enable us to work together more effectively.

The knowledge I have gained through this study should help me deal more successfully with the conflict situations I encounter.

Conclusion

Human interactions are endlessly complicated by the many variables which exist in the human condition. However, we must strive to expand our knowledge of human interaction in order to use this information to lead more productive lives. Conflict situations are usually stressful for those involved in the situation. This study investigates the management of conflicts by principals. The findings support the view that many management techniques are available and principals choose

those which they feel will best suit the situation. It is also clear that conflicts produce both positive and negative outcomes and that principals are interested in increasing positive outcomes and limiting negative ones. A good deal of information is available to help them achieve that end.

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Appendix A

Letter to Superintendents

Box 1572
Sackville, New Brunswick
E0A 3C0
Date

Superintendent's name and address

Dear (Superintendent's name):

This letter is being written to request permission to contact some of the principals in your District to invite them to participate in a research project I am conducting.

I am a student in the Master of Education program at The University of Alberta and am specializing in educational administration. The area I am investigating for my thesis is conflict management.

Writings from the fields of psychology and business management have identified conflict management techniques employed in conflict situations. I now intend to interview principals to determine the techniques they use to manage conflict. It is anticipated each interview will require 1 - 1 1/2 hours of the principal's time. The researcher will use techniques to insure confidentiality of the data collected. A comparison of techniques identified should provide information on the variety of techniques used by principals to deal with conflict and may suggest techniques which would be useful to share with principals.

It is my intention to share my findings with the principals who participate in the study.

Your cooperation in considering this request is much appreciated. If you require further information, please contact me at the above address or at 536-0654 (work) or 536-2984 (home).

An approval form and stamped, self-addressed envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Marion Holder

Appendix B

Approval Form

1. The Board of School Trustees of District _____

agrees _____

does not agree _____

to allow Marion Holder to contact principals in the District to conduct research.

2. If permission is granted, the Superintendent

agrees _____

does not agree _____

to inform principals they may be contacted by the researcher.

3. If permission is granted, would you like to designate the principals to be contacted?

yes _____

no _____

Names, addresses of designated principals:

4. If you do not wish to designate principals, would you be willing to include with this approval form a list of names and addresses of principals in your District?

yes _____

no _____

THANK YOU!

- Appendix C

Letter to Principals

Box 1572
Sackville, NB
E0A 3C0
Date

(Principal's name and address)

Dear (Principal's name):

Your School Board has granted permission for me to contact you to invite you to participate in a research project I am conducting.

I am investigating conflict management techniques for the thesis I am preparing as part of a Master's program.

If you agree to participate in my study, I will require approximately 1 - 1 1/2 hours of your time to conduct an interview in which I will ask you to relate two incidents in which you have been involved in a conflict with an adult (parent, teacher, Board member, superintendent, etc.) in your work situation. The incidents will be of your choosing and I shall take precautions to assure the confidentiality of the information you give.

A consent form and self-addressed envelope are enclosed for your convenience in informing me of your decision.

I fully appreciate how busy your work life is and shall be unfailingly grateful if you feel you can participate in my project. It is my intention to share the results of my research with those who participate.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely yours,

Marion Holder

enc.

Appendix C

Letter to Principals

Box 1572
Sackville, NB
E0A 3C0
Date

(Principal's name and address)

Dear (Principal's name):

Your School Board has granted permission for me to contact you to invite you to participate in a research project I am conducting.

I am investigating conflict management techniques for the thesis I am preparing as part of a Master's program.

If you agree to participate in my study, I will require approximately 1 - 1 1/2 hours of your time to conduct an interview in which I will ask you to relate two incidents in which you have been involved in a conflict with an adult (parent, teacher, Board member, superintendent, etc.) in your work situation. The incidents will be of your choosing and I shall take precautions to assure the confidentiality of the information you give.

A consent form and self-addressed envelope are enclosed for your convenience in informing me of your decision.

I fully appreciate how busy your work life is and shall be unfailingly grateful if you feel you can participate in my project. It is my intention to share the results of my research with those who participate.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely yours,

Marion Holder

enc.

Appendix D

Consent Form

Name: _____

I agree _____
do not agree _____ to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate, I shall contact you concerning an interview arrangement. It would be helpful if you could provide the following information:

1. Would you prefer the interview take place
   in your office _____

   in a neutral location _____

2. What time of day is best for you?
   a.m. _____
   p.m. _____
   evening _____

3. What days are best for you?

   Monday _____

   Tuesday _____

   Wednesday _____

   Thursday _____

   Friday _____

   weekend _____

THANK YOU!

Appendix E

Demographic Information

INTERVIEWEE NO. _____

1. Sex: Male _____
   Female _____

2. Years of experience as: Teacher _____
   Administrator _____

3. Degrees held: Bachelors _____
   Masters _____
   Doctorate _____

4. Area of specialty in degrees: Bachelors _____
   Masters _____
   Doctorate _____

5. Please list the area of specialty in which you teach/taught in descending order beginning with the subject area in which you have the most teaching training/experience:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Grade levels in present school _____

7. Do you have any special training in conflict management techniques?

   Yes _____
   No _____

If yes, please describe:

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Each participant was asked to relate two incidents in which she/he had been involved in a conflict with an adult in the work setting. For each incident, the following questions were used by the interviewer to guide the interview.

1. Please identify the role (parent, teacher, school trustee, superintendent) of the other person in the conflict.

2. Please relate the details of the conflict situation you wish to report.

3. Please describe the steps you took to resolve this conflict.

4. What do you perceive as positive outcomes of this conflict?

5. What were the negative outcomes of the conflict in your opinion?

6. Please rate the success of resolution of the conflict reported:

1	2	3	4	5
not successful		successful		very successful